

Theodicy: Black Suffering

A Professional Project  
Presented to the Faculty of the  
School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
Willie Lee Wright

June 1976

*This professional project, completed by*

Willie L. Wright,

*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty  
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF MINISTRY**

*Faculty Committee*

Joseph C. Haugh Jr.  
James Overbeck

May 3, 1976  
Date

Joseph C. Haugh Jr.  
Dean

## IN APPRECIATION

There are several persons who have had a significant part in bringing this project to completion. This project would never have been underway without the inspiration and encouragement and critical evaluations of Dr. Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and Dr. James Overbeck of the School of Theology at Claremont.

I owe a special debt to Dr. John B. Cobb who was my committee chairperson during the early stages of research and writing. I find it difficult to express the value of the assistance given by my wife, Suzanne, in terms of the typing of several drafts of the project. Her patience and longsuffering with my frustrations is appreciated.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Pages
I. INTRODUCTION	1
A. METHODOLOGY	
B. CHAPTER ANALYSIS	
II. SUFFERING SERVANT	7
A. THE SUFFERING SERVANT IN DEUTERO-ISAIAH	
B. THE SUFFERING OF BLACK PEOPLE AS SERVANTS OF GOD	
III. LIBERATION	18
A. OPPRESSION AND LIBERATION	
B. THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE	
IV. RECONCILIATION	34
A. DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THE LIVES OF PEOPLE	
B. THE SUFFERING OF GOD	
V. CONCLUSION	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	47

## ABSTRACT

This project discusses theodicy in relation to black suffering in America. Theodicy refers to a discussion of God in response to the problem of human experience within a world in which pain and suffering occur. Each of the models used in this project - Joseph Washington's idea of the suffering servant, James Cone's idea of liberation and Major Jones' idea of suffering with God are responses to the theodicy question in relation to black suffering. Washington says that God is justified in black suffering because He chooses to use it to bring salvation to the world. For Cone, God is justified in black suffering because He is in process of liberating blacks and other oppressed people. And for Jones, God is justified in black suffering because blacks and other oppressed people are suffering with God.

I will attempt to show that selected models of Black Theology in response to theodicy have established human criterions on which one is to receive the Grace of God. My contention is that these criterions - suffering, oppression and co-suffering with God are the result of the irresponsibility of whites to blacks, and not God to human beings.

I have reached the conclusion that history and

divine providence mean that God is in control of human history. The reason being that God is omnipotent. This means that He is all powerful. I believe that God is responsible for all persons, but God is not responsible for what each person does. What a person does is an act of freedom inherent in their being. To say that God is not responsible for what each person does may suggest that God is not in control. God's control is seen in the sense that He provides us with possibilities. God does not control history in terms of the traditional. God provides us with the best possibilities; however, we have to decide to either accept or reject these possibilities. God is not responsible for evil if we accept the notion of human depravity. Black suffering has been the result of the choice on the part of whites to enslave blacks. God is not responsible for evil. He tries to influence us toward the good. According to John Cobb, God is a persuasive force rather than a coercive force. Blacks, whites and God will have to straighten things out. This puts us at the maximization of our responsibility.

I feel that through Christian education and sermons (preaching) the black Church can explore new possibilities for blacks to use their freedom more responsibly in relation to whites and to one another. God wants blacks to run the risk of losing their own lives, if necessary, to let people know that they are

capable of becoming agents of good will.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Based on normative materials, the use of the term theodicy appeared first in the work of G. W. Leibnitz in 1710. Theodicy refers to a discussion of God in response to the problem of human experience within a world in which pain and suffering occur. Much of the discussion of this problem by Leibnitz was shaped by the spirit of the Enlightenment. But, the problem can be seen in sources as early as the Wisdom Literature of the Near East, Babylonian, Egyptian and Biblical.

Leibnitz held a philosophical view that this world is the best of all possible worlds. One could conceive of evil, suffering in greater quantities in another world. For Leibnitz, this world holds possibilities for evil and good. One should continue to live and prosper in spite of the experiences of the consequences of evil in this world. One should seek to acquire and actualize those possibilities for good.

Evil or good can be seen as a consequence of how one responds to one's understanding of his world. According to Leibnitz, human beings are capable of acting according to the way in which they understand their



world.<sup>1</sup> Because God knows the choice you are going to make beforehand does not mean that you are not going to make it. This world is the best of all possible, but the problem is the way we understand and respond as well as the way we respond to the way that others understand the world.

Most men in Christ's days on earth responded negatively to Christ's understanding of the world. However, He accepted this negative response in the form of suffering. It was seen that God made no exception for Him, in spite of his obedience and sinlessness. Christ deserved all the happiness in the world, but instead of that which he deserved, he received and accepted suffering.

I believe that the original possibility for all persons is to be in the image of God. Persons are born for a society of fellowship with God and with one another. Suffering enters the world as a consequence of person's falling away from their original possibility. Blacks have been the recipients of the punishment for the sins of the majority race in this country. This is not to say that they have not committed acts of sin them-

---

<sup>1</sup>Nicholas Rescher, The Philosophy of Leibnitz (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 17, 125-29.

selves, but rather suffer on behalf of their own sins plus the sins of their fellow men. What does the situation of suffering mean for black people in America? If God is love, all-knowing and has all power, and if they are also the children of God? This question is crucial for both those blacks who believe in the Christian faith and black non-believers.

Each of the models used in this project - Joseph Washington's idea of the suffering servant, James Cone's idea of liberation and Major Jones' idea of suffering with God are responses to the theodicy question in relation to black suffering. Washington says that God is justified in black suffering because He chooses to use it to bring salvation to the world. For Cone, God is justified in black suffering because He is in process of liberating blacks and other oppressed people. And for Jones, God is justified in black suffering because blacks and other oppressed people are suffering with God.

#### METHODOLOGY

My approach will be to analyze the positions of Joseph R. Washington, James Cone, Major Jones and discuss possible relevance of other theologians to the problem of theodicy. The positions of these three Black

theologians are taken from Is God A White Racist? by William R. Jones. In this work, Jones has selected five normative frameworks or models of Black Theology. His major contention is that these models of Black Theology are questionable. They "raise the issue of divine racism." This means that God takes sides in their discussion of the suffering of black people.<sup>2</sup> He is convinced that Black Theology needs a re-examination in light of some basic doctrines of the Christian faith. He proposes a "humanocentric" approach to the question of theodicy. This is an attempt to "reconcile man's weakness as well as his strength by appealing to human reason."<sup>3</sup> References to this approach can be found at various stages in history. i.e. In the "Renaissance, a revival of Greek and Roman classics were the highest expression of human values and a means to developing the free, responsible individual."<sup>4</sup> From the Renaissance, it can be seen that the problem with human beings is that they are not in touch with their own rational powers. Evil would be an expression of man's lack of reason. The Greek and Roman classics were examples of

---

<sup>2</sup>William R. Jones, Is God A White Racist? (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>Leona C. Gabel, "Humanism," in Encyclopedia Americana, International ed. (1973), XIV 553.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

how human beings could ascertain the best possibility of good through reason. "Reason has been understood as a special capacity in human beings with unlimited possibilities."<sup>5</sup> It gives to human beings and their activity an "exalted status."<sup>6</sup>

William Jones' use of this approach differs from what is understood in the Renaissance in the sense that he shifts the emphasis. For Jones, reason is not something which elevates man for the sake of man. It gives man a "codetermining power"<sup>7</sup> with God. Human beings and God are partners in determining the way things are in the world. Who is responsible for black suffering? All of us are responsible. According to Jones, there is no theodicy that can account adequately for the suffering which blacks experienced.

#### CHAPTER ANALYSIS

In Chapter 2, I shall deal with the model of the Suffering Servant. This model is presented by Joseph Washington and may be called quietism. This model sug-

---

<sup>5</sup>David E. Roberts, Psychotherapy and a Christian View of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), pp. 114-115.

<sup>6</sup>Jones, p. 187.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

gests that black people ought to choose a course of action that will conserve and preserve what is - the reality of Protestant Christianity as seen in white Churches regardless of the past. Black suffering will vindicate the sins of blacks and the sins of whites as well. Whatever relief there is for blacks is to come about through and by God in his own time. Therefore, the suffering of blacks is to be seen as a choice of God for the salvation of the whole. Chapter 3 deals with the model of liberation. This model is presented by James Cone as a denial of any existing truth which is used to maintain degradation of human beings.<sup>8</sup> Whatever relief there is for blacks is to come about here-and-now by whatever means the oppressed community deems necessary.<sup>9</sup> Chapter 4 deals with the model of reconciliation as presented by Major Jones. Whatever relief there is for blacks is always seen in the relief of God. Blacks are suffering with God. They must understand their situation as one in which God is found. If we discover that God reconciled himself to all persons, this becomes the course of action for blacks as well.

---

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>9</sup>James H. Cone, Black Theology and Black Power (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), p.6.

## Chapter II

## SUFFERING SERVANT

Joseph R. Washington's understanding of theodicy can be seen from a recent work, The Politics of God. In the first half of this book, Washington is concerned about the origins of color prejudice. He concludes that prejudice is a part of the preconscious white folk religion of America.

The second half of this book presents more clearly Washington's theodicy. My first impression brought a note of a double soteriological role for blacks. On the one hand, blacks are to suffer for the oneness of humanity. And on the other hand, blacks are to suffer for the oneness of God.<sup>10</sup> The Biblical basis for his argument for the suffering of blacks is taken from Isaiah 53:2-12, which I plan to deal with later in this discourse.

Washington's understanding of black suffering shows the concept of the universality of God. The Old Testament and New Testament illustrate the universality

---

<sup>1</sup>William R. Jones, Is God A White Racist? (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 84.

of God; which is to say that what God does has implications for the whole. God's choice of black suffering for his purpose would indeed have implications for the whole of mankind. The suffering of black people symbolizes a universal mission to the total human family.

If the Negro is the "Suffering Servant," God has called him not to make group differences irrelevant but to make them enriching for all mankind. . . . To witness to the one humanity of the one God here in the United States where groups reside in disiveness. . . . Moreover, the Negro is called to be the servant whereby all nations, not just America, will be redeemed.<sup>2</sup>

The problem for Washington is that blacks have not yet perceived themselves as the Suffering Servants; a people of sorrows acquainted with grief for a holy purpose. This holy purpose to which Washington refers is the healing of the transgression of all God's people in America, if not elsewhere. Through their suffering "we are healed" - black and white together.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of this suffering by a whole people for four centuries and placed in the perspective of the Bible, we contend here that the Negro cannot be understood or understand himself except as another "chosen people." By their stripes may all be healed.<sup>4</sup>

Black people are not to seek avenues for which

---

<sup>2</sup>Joseph R. Washington, The Politics of God (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 160.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

to evade suffering, if the will of God is their primary concern.

. . . the will of God for His Negro people demands no exodus. For God has called the Negro people to an infinitely more complex and responsible task - not only by being released from bondage but of releasing its captors from their shackles as well.<sup>5</sup>

Black suffering is to be accepted voluntarily, since God has chosen to use it. The problem, as might be termed "being black," is something that black people did not ask for. But its presence in America and elsewhere in the world is one which "we all have to live with."<sup>6</sup> This presence has been resented by whites over two centuries in this country. One period which was extremely horrifying was America slavery. The white Christian churches remained silent (with exception of a few who spoke out against the conditions in which blacks were kept) while blacks suffered many afflictions without just cause. It appears just too easy to say that it is the will of God. But on the contrary, it pointed to the irresponsibility of whites. In the suffering servant model, Washington contends that God choose to use the irresponsibility of whites for His purposes. Washington believes that one can only understand this irresponsibility of whites to blacks in America in the

---

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 173.



context in which one understands the "Suffering Servant." This model of the Suffering Servant symbolizes the presence of God.<sup>7</sup> This means that through the suffering experiences of blacks the presence of God in all our midst can be affirmed.

For Washington, the situation in which blacks experienced suffering is the opportunity of God.<sup>8</sup> The opportunity of God is to use for good what men have termed evil. This is the politics of God, a transcendence which accomplishes its will through a suffering people. Washington says that the symbolic meaning of the cross is a transformation of man's hopelessness.<sup>9</sup> That which in the end seems to be an affliction is part of the process of the purpose of God. God will not be defeated. William Jones puts it this way. "God is engaged in human history for a purpose which will not be frustrated."<sup>10</sup>

#### THE SUFFERING SERVANT IN DEUTERO-ISAIAH

Washington transports this idea of the Suffering

---

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 156. see also, Jones, pp. 82, 86.

<sup>8</sup>Personal Interview with Joseph Washington, University of California at Riverside, December 1975.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>William Jones, "Theodicy and Methodology in Black Theology," Harvard Theological Review, LXIV (1971) 545.

Servant from Isaiah 53:2-12. Let us try to discover whether or not the meaning of this idea has changed. first, we need to take a brief look at the context in which Second Isaiah applied this idea.

The task which faced the anonymous prophet, Deutero-Isaiah, was to console and interpret the signs of the times for his people in face of their despondency and exile (Isaiah 49:14, 40:27). The primary aim of the prophet was to inspire them with his own understanding of God (Isaiah 45:6, 10, 12, 14, 22). In Isaiah 45, verses one through seven, the prophet sees Cyrus as God's anointed to overthrow Babylon on Israel's behalf so that she could be free and enjoy the experience of redemption. Cyrus was king of Anshan in 553 and through revolutionary activities made himself king of Persia in 550. In 546 he established a Persian governor in Uruk. A great expectation on the part of those groaning under the Babylonian yoke was that Cyrus would take Babylon and liberate them. An interesting feature about Deutero-Isaiah's prophecy concerning Cyrus is the universal aspect. In Isaiah 45:6 it is seen that ultimately this redemption will be for the sake of the whole world, "that they may know from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none beside me: I am the Lord, and

there is no other."<sup>11</sup>

Poetry is a major characteristic of Deutero-Isaiah's style of writing.<sup>12</sup> The Servant model is presented in the form of a poem. There has been numerous commentaries on this model. However, we can conclude on some points as normative. The origin and designation to this office (humiliated and suffering) is afflicted by God. The servant is a volunteer agent of divine work of reconciliation. Prophecy precedes the servant model. In 40:2, we have a pronouncement concerning the servant's suffering on behalf of his own sins. And in 53:4-6, the suffering is for sins that were not his own.<sup>13</sup>

McFadyen says that this point of difference has given many scholars reason

. . . to believe that Servant of the songs cannot be the Israel of the prophecy, the actual historical Israel. But it must refer either to ideal Israel - Israel, not as she is in reality, but as she is in the purpose of God and in the light of her mission and destiny. Other scholars deny this and regard the servant there as an individual.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup>The New Oxford Annotated Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

<sup>12</sup>These notes have been taken from these commentaries: C.R. North, The Suffering Servant In Deutero-Isaiah, (London: SCM Press, 1952). H.H. Rowley, The Suffering Servant and Other Essays (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952). Claus Westerman, Isaiah 40-60 (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>J.E. McFadyen, The Book of Prophecy of Isaiah (New York: Macmillan, 1910), p 342.

Scholars such as Kissane, Martin Noth and others would be skeptical of whether the servant was a historical individual. He rather "represented a plus beyond all historical facts. He is a Messianic figure. . . ." <sup>15</sup> This model has been made to parallel many human experiences. For example, Christians from New Testament days onward have applied it to Christ, Christian community, the Church, etc. And we see here that Joseph Washington has applied it to the black experience. Perhaps the crucial point of the Servant model, which also has been a point of departure for some theologians is that the suffering of the innocent is regarded as inspiring with a redemptive purpose. This is the meaning of this model as understood by Deutero-Isaiah in the context of exile of the Israelites in Babylon.

#### THE SUFFERING OF BLACK PEOPLE AS SERVANTS OF GOD

For Washington the situation which blacks face in America parallels Isaiah's experience in Babylon. <sup>16</sup> Blacks were chosen to suffer on whatever grounds Israel

---

<sup>15</sup>Joh Lindblom, The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah (Lund: Gleerup, 1951), p. 8.

<sup>16</sup>Washington, p. 156.

was chosen:

Why God chosen Negro people to be His "Suffering Servant" fulcrum to transform through acceptance of group differences divisive mankind into unitive mankind (the brotherhood of man dimension of the kingdom) is no more fathomable than his choice of Israel to be his Suffering Servant to make that fatherhood of God dimension of the kingdom or His choice of Jesus Christ to reveal His kingdom established for all mankind or the delimiting or rejection of his purpose by the Church manifest through establishment of proliferated<sup>17</sup> kingdoms with exclusive rather inclusive dimensions.

The common theory held by most people is that suffering is the result of sin on the part of the sufferer; although, there are other cases where the innocent perish for the guilty (2Samuel 21). Washington is saying that black people can obtain their own, as well as the salvation of others by suffering at the hands of whites. St. Paul was against any notion of sacrifice or suffering to gain salvation. Paul attempted to spell this out in the book of Romans. The point there is that God justifies (saves) a person. What a person does has no effect on the act of justification. In Judaism merit could be gained by doing good works and suffering.<sup>18</sup> Washington is not comfortable with the method of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King desired to see

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>18</sup>H.D. Betz, "Sermon On The Mount," Spring Semester 1976, School of Theology at Claremont.

blacks judged on the content of their character and not on the color of their skins. Dr. King sought to achieve this end by passive resistance. Washington would have preferred passive submission.<sup>19</sup>

Can we really merit salvation by suffering? This is a difficult question to answer. However, we find examples in Biblical texts where this seems to be possible. In the book of Job, we see this idea. Job loses everything and in the end gets it all back. His story is contrasted by his friends holding a different view, that one should avoid pain and suffering. In Genesis 19:1-38, we find that if "Lot" had been able to find ten righteous persons (even one), the city of Sodom and Gomorrah would have been saved from destruction. In first Isaiah 1:9, we also find that the whole concept of the remnant is built on this idea.

Joseph Washington's answer to the theodicy problem is that God is justified because he did not create the situation in which blacks are mistreated, but chose to use it as a means to salvation for blacks. Does black suffering in hope explain the theodicy problem? I think

---

<sup>19</sup>Washington, pp. 162-166.

what Washington is trying to say is that God is not responsible for the situation, but He is responsible for the limitations of the situation. This is to say that God felt that black suffering had gone far enough. God decided to make black suffering salvific. Eschatologically speaking, the vision which takes us beyond suffering is God's providence. From this view, there does not seem to be an option, when God chooses this course of direction as a means to salvation. Either you find salvation through suffering or refuse to suffer and be damned. Blacks have no idea as to how long will they have to suffer. Washington says it is up to God.<sup>20</sup>

William Jones draws the conclusion that Washington does not account for the problem of black suffering in the context of God's sovereignty and freedom. God's sovereignty means for Jones that human beings are endowed with "codetermining ceters of power."<sup>21</sup> If we say that suffering is an unconditional relationship between blacks and God. This puts a limit on the freedom of black people as human beings.

---

<sup>20</sup> Jones, Is God A White Racist? p. 88

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 87, 188.

Where is God's real loyalty; does He have real regard for blacks themselves or is He simply using them for a higher end - the highest good of whites? . . . . I contend that the vicarious suffering of blacks is intended more for white salvation than for black liberation.<sup>22</sup>

I agree with William Jones' conclusion. Yet, I am not convinced whether we really understanding the ways of God. The only assurance we have is God's grace. When and how that is given is not in our power to determine. We do not know the mind of God. There just may be a great deal of truth to what Washington is saying to blacks in America. Even if whites continue to be oppressive, we have no right to deny them the opportunity to experience God's grace. Even if some blacks continued to hate whites, whites have no right to deny them this opportunity. Jesus Christ has sacrificed himself for all. He has earned enough "merits" good enough for the whole world. Christ sacrifice is an "once-and-for-all event." Black suffering will not duplicate that event. Why blacks suffer is to a great extent a mystery which we must continued to unwind.

---

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 91-92.



## Chapter III

## LIBERATION

Let us turn to a discussion of this problem in the model of liberation. What can black people do in their peculiar situation in America from the perspective of James Cone? What does Cone have to offer our discussion of the problem of suffering?

What is interesting in Cone's approach is first of all his choice of model which is quite different from that of Washington. Cone sees the whole of the black struggle in the context of liberation. We have seen that God, according to Washington, is primarily transcendent. God transcends the particular situation of black people by choice. For Cone, God is an imminent reality.

We might say that Cone's approach is from the point of view of the effects we have upon God. The object of his view of God is to deal with the acts of God, not with God's so-called person and natures apart from what God does.<sup>1</sup> In describing Christology within

---

<sup>1</sup>James H. Cone, Black Theology and Black Power (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), p. 61.

the context of liberation, Cone says:

Because human liberation is God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ, its source and meaning cannot be separated from Christological sources (Scripture, tradition, and social existence)<sup>2</sup> and content (Jesus in his past, present, and future).

This is a radical way of speaking about God. For Cone, calling Christ God means having experienced a state of freedom which comes from Christ, ". . . . Liberation is not a human possession but a divine gift of freedom."<sup>3</sup> If we speak about God apart from any act of liberation, this is a wrong objectifying approach. One must speak of God in terms of the freedom one can experience. The one who is liberated by the act of divine must himself be oppressed. This is the criterion.

What we say about God always has the character of participant oppressed with God and being liberated with God. Preaching the Crucified means preaching the resurrected.<sup>4</sup> For Cone, the resurrection has no meaning alone. Cone sees the root of suffering, in essence, as sin. And sin is the absence of the activity of God. The activity of God entails, in essence, liberation.

---

<sup>2</sup>James H. Cone, God of the Oppressed (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>James H. Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation (New York: Lippincott, 1970), p. 90.

<sup>4</sup>William R. Jones, Is God A White Racist? (New York: Doubleday, 1973), pp. 111, 118.

For the gospel proclaims that God is with us now actively fighting the forces which make men captive. And it is of theology and the Church to know where God is at work so that we can join him in this fight against evil.

Righteousness means God is doing justice, that he is putting right what men have wrong. Righteousness means that God cannot turn his back on evil, that he cannot pretend that wrong is right.<sup>5</sup>

For Cone, oppression is another word for sin.<sup>6</sup> Oppression is sin because it does not allow "degree of human freedom and dignity."<sup>7</sup> The character of oppression is racism. It might be said that the most outstanding feature of the life style of Christ is his ability to look at persons in light of who they could become. According to Cone, "a man is free when he sees clearly the fulfillment of his being and is thus capable of making the envisioned self reality."<sup>8</sup> This sin is on the shoulders of whites, because it is racist in character. No individual whites are exempted because the conscience of those not actually participating in acts of oppression is not stirred to the point where they are willing to risk their identity for the cause

---

<sup>5</sup>Cone, Black Theology and Black Power, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup>Jones, p. 104

<sup>7</sup>Cone, Black Theology and Black Power, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

of liberation. To identify with the cause of liberation is to take on the character of that which is being oppressed.<sup>9</sup>

#### OPPRESSION AND LIBERATION

The impact of oppression, whether institutional or structural, is abusive. This is the cause for black suffering. It might be said that the greatest consequence of this sin is that which has caused blacks to suffer physically and socially. Washington adds the notion that blacks have suffered religiously as well. These physical abuses can be seen in the constant threats to the existence of black people. A number of black persons have eluded to this manifestation in their writings and speeches concerning police brutality, the many forms of genocide and economic deprivation.

The social consequences of this sin can be seen in the attitude of whites toward blacks. Their attitude has failed to acknowledge, in almost every case, the personhood and integrity of the black individual, family, and community.

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.61.

White people did everything within their power to define Black reality, to tell us who we were, and their definition, of course, extended no further than their social, political and economic interests. They tried to make us believe that God created black people to be white people's servants. We blacks therefore, were expected to enjoy plowing their fields, cleaning their houses, mowing their lawns and working in their sawmills, and when we showed signs of displeasure with our elected and inferior status, they called us "uppity niggers" and quickly put us in our "place". To be put in one's place, as defined by white society, was a terrible reality for blacks in Bearden, it meant being beat by the town cop and spending an inordinate length of time in a stinking jail, it meant attending a movie and drinking water from a colored fountain, it meant refusing to retaliate when called a nigger --- unless you were prepared to leave town at the precise moment of your rebellion. You had no name except your first name or "boy"; and if you were past the age of 65, you might have been bestowed the dubious honor of being called "uncle" or "auntie."<sup>10</sup>

For Washington, the religious abuse is constituted by reality of blacks being divorced from mainstream Protestantism.<sup>11</sup> It is best represented by the white church. For Cone, whites are divorced from Christianity. Christianity is best represented by Black Power.

Black rebellion is a manifestation of God himself actively involved in the present-day affairs of men for the purpose of liberating a people. Through his work, black people now know that there is something more important than life itself. They can afford to be indifferent toward death, because life devoid of freedom is not worth living.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> James H. Cone, "Black Theology and Reconciliation" Christianity and Crisis, XXX (January 1973), 303.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph R. Washington, "The Roots and Fruits of Black Theology," Theology Today, XXX (July 1973), 128.

<sup>12</sup> J. Cone, Black Theology and Black Power, p.32.

God's will is the standard by which all human actions must meet the test of good and evil. "The God of Scripture and Tradition is the God whose will is disclosed in the liberation of oppressed from bondage."<sup>13</sup> What conforms to God's will is good and what goes counter is evil. According to Cone, history shows that it is God's will that men ought be free.<sup>14</sup> This is the meaning of the Exodus and Incarnation. If persons are to do the will of God, they must do it through acts of liberation wherever there are oppressed people.<sup>15</sup>

The solution to the problem of suffering is the power to overcome it. One acquires the power by being a Christian, according to cone. When one confronts Christ, stripped of all false pretense (oppressive attitudes), Christ authenticates their existence. To authenticate one's existence means to be given the power to affirm one's self worth. To confront Christ, through the act of faith, is to confront the love of God. And the person "who is loved by God has no value in himself; what gives him value is precisely the fact that God loves him."<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p.45.

<sup>15</sup>W. Jones, pp. 116-118

<sup>16</sup>J. Cone, Black Theology and Black Power, p. 42.

The condition in which one exercise the act of faith to confront Christ is oppression. This is a point at which William Jones is critical of Cone. Cone contends that "Jesus is where the oppressed are and continues his work there."<sup>17</sup>

If it can be seen that Cone's theodicy is reflected in terms of liberation of the oppressed. It may be well to raise the question of the meaning of liberation. I would surmise that concerning the question of the meaning of liberation, one could view Christ's purpose as plain and his teaching as clear. First, Christ is come to set the captive free, to bind up the broken hearted. There is not much difficulty with the understanding that to be oppressed, according to Christ, is to be without God. To be under the influence of those factors which define human purpose and direction, and to give one's self to God, and to serve his use. This is made plain in Jesus teaching. Perhaps, it is best summed up in the three great parables of grace. The sheep is captured by his own interest and is outside the fold and no longer serves the shepherd. The coin is lost because its usefulness is limited. The boy is lost because he is indulging in selfish desires and is breaking his father's heart.

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p.38.

Just looking at oppression from the perspective of the relationship between blacks and whites in America, there is little question about who is being oppressed and who is inflicting this oppression. There is no doubt that the burden of oppression is heaviest on the shoulders of black people in America. However, this view of liberation can also apply to other minorities and persons that are victims of oppression. But, I appreciate Cone's willingness to take the initiative to apply his view to an understanding of his own people, so that blacks may become appreciative of who they really are. For Cone, the most important reality concerning black people is their "blackness." The black man does not need to hate himself because he is not white, and he should feel no need to become like others."<sup>18</sup>

The affirmation that God sets the oppressed free is an "act of reconciliation."<sup>19</sup> God loosens the shackles with which one is bound, and sets into motion the process of becoming. The process of becoming means self-realization, self-actualization, self-fulfillment. To engage in a process of becoming, one has to be free

---

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p.52.

<sup>19</sup>J. Cone, "Black Theology and Reconciliation", p. 303.



of those sins that are in opposition to it. Oppression in various forms is in opposition to such process.<sup>20</sup> It would not seem likely that black people could and would become what God desires when their existence is always controled and defined by white people. Therefore, Cone feels that God has taken on a black identity to prevent oppression from impeding this process. We are impressed anew from Cone's viewpoint that black people are really created for action, for achievement, for service and also for sacrifice. All this in the context of freedom under God. For Cone, all this would be freedom in God.

Can one afford to take seriously the meaning of Paul's affirmation that those whom Christ has set free is free indeed? For a number of years, I never really thought of this in the practical sense. Freedom in this sense is "ultimate freedom." Since Christ, who grants this freedom, is the end of all human strength. This freedom transcends any particular expression of freedom, within a cultural context. To say that we have been set free by Christ is to say that call to freedom of highest consequences.

---

<sup>20</sup>Joseph C. Hough, Jr., Project Understanding  
(Claremont: School of Theology, 1976)

It becomes our duty to stay within the freedom in which Christ has set us free. For Washington, this meant to suffer. Christ has made our suffering of "ultimate concern." For Cone, in order for blacks to stay within the freedom wherein Christ made possible is to employ "any means necessary."

What does "any means necessary" imply? First it is to be perceived that blacks in Christ are essentially free persons. According to Cone, all their actions, no matter how commonplace or how far removed from the eyes of ethics, as might be defined by white culture, are made pleasing to God. This point is criticised by William Jones.<sup>21</sup> Their thoughts, motives and deeds which make up their daily routine will determine their realization of who they are - liberated persons.

The measure of liberation achievable is limited to the consciousness of freedom as defined by the oppressed and downtrodden in their fight for justice. In an unjust society, freedom for Christ can be found only among those who are in chains.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>W. Jones, p. 117.

<sup>22</sup>J. Cone, Black Theology and Black Power, p. 43.

This further implies that blacks in Christ learn to direct their thoughts, speech and actions in concerns for liberation not in their lives but the lives of other blacks as well. This call may indeed entail suspension of the maxim of presupposed ethical behavior. William Jones takes the opposite position. He calls for the ethical. Cone says that "the ethical behavior of Christians is defined in and by the oppressed community whom God has called into being for freedom."<sup>23</sup>

Cone contends that there is but one standard of ethics. By one standard, he means that God establishes the ethical relationship with those whom he has made free. This established standard covers all personal and group relations to God, to one's self and to the world. This single standard of ethics sets clear, positive and complete pattern of right living. It might be said that this same line of thought was expressed in the phrase, "the right to protest for right," from a speech made by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It gives one integrity of outlook. This is to say that one is headed in the right direction and is aware of the necessary means of accomplishing the end. This point does not

---

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p.6.

differ much from Washington's thought. The means necessary for Washington is suffering. But, I take it that the understanding here is that Cone contends that blacks will find redemption by affirming their liberation through Christ which is realized by any means necessary to remain so. Suffering can not be a means because it would negate any affirmation of liberation.<sup>24</sup> It is seen that if God has liberated blacks through Christ, then one is enticed to use whatever means necessary to maintain this in reality.

I have alluded to the question of Echatology in the context of black suffering at the beginning of this chapter. For Washington redemption for blacks is somewhere in the future. It is realized only when whites confess to what Washington calls the oneness of God. As you probably sensed, that could never be. For Cone, redemption for blacks is a continous reality.

The "essence" of God can be seen as the activity of liberation. God choose blacks to be liberated. Oppression is a necessary condition for salvation. Black people are summoned to participate in the liberating acts

---

<sup>24</sup>W. Jones, Is God A White Racist?, p. 119.

of God. This is a call to live above human existence. I do not quite see how one live above human conditions and remain human, when those conditions of human existence entail possibilities of pain and suffering. I do not believe that Christ liberates a person to become a dummy or a mere object. There is no cancellation of the freedom of will in the act of liberation. The option to fall back into sin is left open. I would accept Cone's position with the understanding that the act of liberation is continuous. From reading the works of William Jones, I gather that Jones feels that Cone is being superficial in his understanding of liberation.

#### THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE

Christ made the possibility for all persons to become liberated. According to Cone, for black people to experience their liberation within the context of human existence would require two fundamental changes: theological language and the means. Theological language must become a theological language of blackness. The language of blackness can be learned and actually spoken by the communities of black Christians. I think there is an indispensable need to adapt the theological language so that it will actually speak to the needs of

black people. Cone's caution is that one "must be especially careful not to put this new wine into old wineskins." This is to say that he is not just adding blackness to an understanding of God from the opposite point of view. Gerhard Ebeling has associated spirit with language.<sup>25</sup> Language has a spirit element about it. From this view, it can be seen that to become engaged in adapting or changing language means also to change the spirit of persons. It is probable that most people function according to the way they feel. Feelings are conveyed through some form of language. So, that we adopt a black theological language, we consequently adopt a certain kind of feeling. To speak of God as liberation is to adopt a certain feeling.

A major point at which I disagree with Cone's understanding of God's response to theodicy is the selective means. "Any means" could mean that we could create a situation worse than what we are experiencing. There is an inconsistency between Christ's concern for persons and the concern of black people for persons in efforts to be liberated. That's if we take Cone seriously. I do not agree that blacks ought to obtain their

---

<sup>25</sup> Gerhard Ebeling, God and Word (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 42-43. See also Gerhard Ebeling, Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), pp. 98-99.

liberation by any means necessary, neither do I encourage suffering. I have doubts that salvation can be wrung out of suffering. I would rather believe that salvation is by conquering suffering. It is possible to understand that the suffering of Christ extended his power and influence, in the human phenomena, to the depths of experience: which implies an inclusive influence of the power of Christ in the human experience. The resurrection of Christ means for those who believe to share in this inclusive influence and power are given to Christian as a gift.

It can be seen that the intention of God, through Jesus Christ, is for all human beings to live together in fellowship. If violence is chosen as a means to this end: what will it do to persons? Violence can not be chosen as a means to this because of Christ's concern for all persons. It is also seen that life is not in one's power to give nor take. Violence takes life. Violence destroys the person enacting as well as the person being acted upon. The objective is not to destroy the person but to remove that which hinders the person from accepting and living in fellowship with others.

In Is God A White Racist?, William Jones con-

cludes that Cone's understanding limits the grace of God to the oppressed.

If we honor the suggestion that we can know God only in relation to man in terms of His liberating acts, then we can speak of God as for all oppressed people only<sup>26</sup> on the basis of the liberation of all oppressed people.

This is also a point at which I disagree with Cone. I feel that when one accepts Christ, one accepts both the experience of the crucifixion and the resurrection. In I Corinthians 1:13, Paul says that the Crucified was a stumbling-block to the Jews. The Greek term for Lordship is *κυριότης*. It is at the heart of the Christian faith. It points to a unity of Lord and pain.<sup>27</sup>

The two are inseparable. As Christians, we experience suffering. But, we do not remain at the level of suffering. We have power to move beyond suffering. I will not accept a position that would limit the grace of God to a state of suffering or to a state of liberation.

---

<sup>26</sup>Jones, Is God A White Racist?, p. 118.

<sup>27</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Faith and Understanding (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), I, p. 197.



## Chapter IV

## RECONCILIATION

What contribution can be seen from the position of Major Jones to our discussion of the problem of suffering? For Jones the possibility of overcoming the problem of suffering is to be seen in the hope, which arises out of the black culture. If we are aware of the kinds of theological motifs, it would be easy to recognize that Jurgen Moltmann has developed a theology of hope. When Moltmann's theological motifs is applied in the context of Black Theology, the emphasis will inevitably be modified. The contention of Moltmann is that there is something beyond the present which constantly lures the inspiration of all human beings forward, as if the future is always calling us to it. Regardless, of our immediate circumstance, there is always this call. This is to say that we are always in a process of becoming.

According to Jones, God is ahead of us because he has experienced what we are now experiencing.<sup>1</sup> This does not come across strongly.

---

<sup>1</sup>W.R. Jones, Is God A White Racist? (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 139.

One may be influenced to think that Jones uses Moltmann and Heidegger's motif interchangeably. The Heidegger motif speaks of a God that is not yet.<sup>2</sup> This impression is conveyed that if one thinks as William Jones. William Jones feels that Major Jones conveys the idea that blacks are presently co-suffers with God.<sup>3</sup> I do not agree with William Jones' impression of Major Jones at this point.

Major Jones begins his understanding of theodicy by viewing God as both God and man. This is to say that God is both transcendent and immanent. God transcends human history as well as participates in it.

#### THE SUFFERING OF GOD

It might be said that the great assumption of Jones is that God has been resurrected and reigns with power. Jones discusses God at length from an anthropological point of view. God is reduced to the status of a human being.<sup>4</sup> He accepts and endures suffering to the end of his life. This becomes a pattern of discipleship because God (in Christ) did not change the nature of the

---

<sup>2</sup>Magda King, Heidegger's Philosophy (New York: Dell, 1966), p. 155.

<sup>3</sup>W. Jones, *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 133.

society in which he found himself. This is also the understanding of the early Christian community in the book of I Peter.

Man is summoned to share in God's suffering at the hands of a godless world. . . . it is not the religious act that makes the Christian, but participation in the Suffering of God in the Secular Life.<sup>5</sup>

The theological contention of Major Jones is that human nature is essentially good.<sup>6</sup> A person has the power to make decisions. Suffering is not part of the basic nature of human beings. It is there by the result of wrong decisions. This means that evil is not a fixed component of a person's basic nature. The view that human beings are free also implies that they are endowed with a dual power. In the works of Jones, it is seen that the gift of the power to make decisions within the limits of human existence has also made persons distance from their basic nature. "We are free, but we are estranged in our freedom."<sup>7</sup> It might be said that it is within human power to conform human conduct to human choice. "Man is fully capable of becoming what he wills to become."<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>M. Jones, Black Awareness: A Theology of Hope (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 125.

<sup>6</sup>M. Jones, Christian Ethics For Black Theology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 6.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 29, 37.

Suffering is the result of the kinds of decisions persons make. The problem of suffering is a problem with whatever persons have allowed and created as hindrances to finite freedom.

Suffering is not a principle of permanence in human nature. It can be seen for example that suffering is like an error is in our decision-making which correspond to our actions. To go through the history of blacks and whites in America is to go through the ground of that which is part of us. Basic human nature will give us a clue. Mistakes have been made at various times. Yet, at times, no one will believe that an answer to the problem of evil could be seen as reference to human choices.

Jones says that

If one looks at the history of American slavery, he must conclude that so great was the evil of institutional slavery until neither white nor black Americans have fully recovered.<sup>9</sup>

This is to say that decisions one group makes also affect the other groups as well. But the fact that blacks have suffered on the part of the decisions of whites in America is not the complete picture with Jones. I suppose that it is equally correct to assume that it was the decision

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 35-36.

of blacks to submit to such conditions, in some cases this would cause them to hate.

The divine sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the best of all possible examples. Christ lived and died as an example, and to make it possible for us to receive some assistance in resisting evil decisions. Christ sets an example and empowers us. We find this idea expressed in I Peter 1:3ff.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? By his great mercy we have born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.<sup>10</sup>

Being good or being "true to one's essential being" (as Child of God) does not mean that some good training has been available to you. Evil can not be annihilated by complacency. Education in itself or educational theories can not become a solution to the problem of evil. Unless, according to Jones in the case of

Those who educate provide the right interpretation, the right understanding and conceptualization of those actions. The innate striving which lead to fulfillment and then ultimate self-realization can succeed. The acquisition of knowledge is also an important object of moral education, since only informed persons will be able to avoid mistaken ways of carrying out his good intention.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>The New Oxford Annotated Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

<sup>11</sup>M. Jones, *Christian Ethics*, pp. 28-30.

For Jones, God empowers black people to overcome their present state of suffering. This is to say that black people are not to look to God for some divine intervention for their salvation.<sup>12</sup> In other words, "God himself is helpless to relieve those who suffer at the hands of a ruthless enemy."<sup>13</sup> Therefore, blacks will have to work out their own salvation, through the inspiration or empowerment of God. This means confronting their oppressors with the love of God.<sup>14</sup> Love of God means working together, deciding together on matters that concern the well being of persons. If this does not work, Jones suggests the black apply "any means necessary."<sup>15</sup> The any means necessary, here, is after the fact. This is in contrast to the position of James Cone, for whom "any means necessary" is before the fact.

#### DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THE LIVES OF PEOPLE

For Jones, the freedom to make decisions is grounded in the grace of God if we affirm "any means necessary" after the fact. The meaning of Christ was before the fact.

---

<sup>12</sup>W. Jones, Is God A White Racist?, p. 140.

<sup>13</sup>M. Jones, Black Awareness, p. 124.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

Christ was forced to suffer at the hand of man ; but, ironically his suffering becomes redemptive on behalf of personal fulfillment. With Christ, we have power to make decisions in light of who persons may become (children of God). Suffering might be said to occur when we stand in the way of those possibilities open to persons to better themselves. Each person reflects the image of God. When this is oppressed, we may also say that part of God is oppressed. For James Cone, "freedom is an essential element of the image of God in persons."<sup>16</sup> The image of God in persons can never exhaust God. This means that we never reach the fullness of who we may become at one time. We are in process. According to John Cobbs, God continues to present possibilities to us. It is essential to Major Jones that we allow the image of God in persons the freedom to become.

Major Jones' answer to the theodicy question is that we have refused to become reconciled to God. In reconciling ourselves to God, we become reconciled to the world. Suffering is the result of our willful refusal to be confronted with the love of God. But instead we have sought to react against our fellow man. It is this way

---

<sup>16</sup> James H. Cone, Black Theology and Black Power (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), p.53.

that we receive forgiveness. God is always with persons in the process of growth and self fulfillment.<sup>17</sup> Suffering occurs when this process is hinged by wrong choices on the part of persons. The wrong choice has to be undone by the right ones. We are not always aware, sometimes, of the number of ways that we can become oppressive. Therefore, we need to get together black and white and discover this. The problem of suffering does not involve blacks only, but whites as well. The love of God is at stake.

We need to get black and white together on decision-making. Together they may decide on the way things are and should be. Making decisions together will set up a form of check and balance system. To be sure, leaders will need to have the best interest of their people at heart. Moreover, those who would be leaders of the Christian Church will have to take their positions more responsibly. As long as whites continue to make decisions concerning the way things are, blacks will continue to experience suffering, perhaps, in a more complex and subtle form. This kind of suffering might be referred to as systemic. The decisions that blacks and whites make together

---

<sup>17</sup>W. Jones, Is God A White Racist?, p. 142.



can lead us away from that part of human existence which induces suffering, because whites are in control of the better means for existence.

The goal of the black awareness movement will fall far short of fulfillment if the movement is not rooted in a God of the future. He must be a God who is strong enough to determine the outcome of the future both within and beyond history. . . . He must be a God who is active on man's behalf; he must be a God who is himself engaged in the cosmic battle with evil. . . . In the black community, God's righteousness is his power in relation to men who are not in the right. . . .

Where God's love is not able to do its work freely, it employs other means such as protest, instruments of law, threats, and punishment, at many points in history, God puts on the ugly mass of his wrath to pressure people to satisfy the needs of others, even when they do not feel like it. . . ., every person is committed with God to the fulfillment of others. Such a commitment means not only that one will contribute to the growth of others, but he is obligated to allow others the freedom for such development without obstructions.<sup>18</sup>

William Jones is more in agreement with the position of Major Jones. Yet, he finds that Jones' understanding of God does not "execute God's power and love in a manner that progressively diminish oppression. From viewing William Jones' conclusion, I might say that Major Jones' position would fit well in the area of Pastoral Psychology. The idea that we are suffering with God may be comforting to most blacks. But, I feel comfort more in knowing that God is greater than all of us (black, white, etc.) I do not feel myself to be with God all the time.

---

<sup>18</sup>M. Jones, Black Awareness, p.128.

## Chapter V

## CONCLUSION

I have learned from William Jones that God takes sides in these models. Having worked through them myself, I find his conclusion to be correct. I do not feel as strong as Jones does concerning which side God really takes in these models. I am not convinced that God is necessarily a divine racist in these models.

History and divine providence mean that God is in control of human history. The reason being that God is omnipotent. This means that He is all powerful. I believe that God is responsible for all persons, but God is not responsible for what each person does. What a person does is an act of freedom inherent in their being. To say that God is not responsible for what each person does may suggest that God is not in control. God's control is seen in the sense that He provides us with possibilities. God does not control history in terms of the traditional. God provides us with the best possibilities; however, we have to decide to either accept or reject these possibilities. God is not responsible for evil if we accept the notion of human depravity. Black suffering has been the result of the choice on the part of whites to enslave blacks.

God is not responsible for evil. He tries to influence us toward the good. According to John Cobb, God is a persuasive force rather than a coercive force. Blacks, whites and God will have to straighten things out. This puts us at the maximization of our responsibility. God calls us to overcome defeat and to move on to a better future. The future<sup>1</sup> is open. It holds two possibilities - opportunity or threat. We have the potential of both.

It seems to me that the freedom of will is under the control of human beings. It might be said that God does not know what we are going to do from one minute to the next; however God provides all possibilities. This is to say that God does not know the choice of the possibility which one will make. But the fact that God provides the possibilities and the depth for it gives God inevitable control. Take, for instance the Genesis account of creation. God creates a world having complete knowledge of its unlimited possibilities, and from it, God creates human beings with the ability to actualize possibilities. The fact of God's knowing the possibilities beforehand does not disturb the freedom of the individual to actualize a selected possibility.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>John B. Cobb, Jr. A Christian Natural Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 203-206.

To put this in a more concrete way would be to say that God is responsible for the possibility of the suffering of black people, but God is not responsible for the actual suffering of black people. The actual suffering is part of human responsibility.

In the anthropological position of Reinhold Niebuhr we discover the term "self-transcendence." This is to say that we have the capacity to look beyond ourselves sufficiently to know that what we think or project as God is not God.<sup>2</sup> The same point can be made in terms of how we respond to each other. That is, we have the capacity to know that what we project as necessary for the well being of other human beings is not necessarily necessary. The essential problem with human beings for Niebuhr is that human beings do not want to recognize their responsibility to a being who infinitely transcends them.

Emil Brunner has argued that the breath of God as the living soul in man is reason and this reason becomes a personal element in us.

---

<sup>2</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), p. 117.

This aspect of human life has freedom to say yes or no to God. We know that have freedom, as seen from Brunner, because God has addressed us in creation. Theodicy may be understood as a consequence of saying no to God - or refusing to become responsible to God. Our responsibility to God is seen in our responsibility to each other.

What do my conclusions about theodicy mean for the future of the black Church? I feel that through Christian education and sermons (preaching) the black Church can explore new possibilities for blacks to use their freedom more responsibly in relation to whites and to one another. This may mean inspiring blacks to take the risk of being hurt again. But, it would not be a risk without God's will. The affirmation that God has a special preference for blacks can be an easy excuse to avoid being responsible to non blacks. God wants blacks to run the risk of losing their own lives, if necessary, to let people know that they are capable of becoming agents of good will.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- COBB, John B., Jr. A Christian Natural Theology. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954.
- BULTMANN, Rudolf. Faith and Understanding. translated by L.P. Smith. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.
- CONE, James H. Black Theology and Black Power. New York: Seabury Press, 1969.
- \_\_\_\_\_. God of the Oppressed. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. A Black Theology of Liberation. New York: Lippincott, 1970.
- EBELING, Gerhard. God and Word. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971.
- JONES, Major J. Black Awareness: A Theology of Hope. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Christian Ethics for Black Theology. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974.
- JONES, William R. Is God A White Racist?. New York: Doubleday, 1973.
- HOUGH, Joseph C. Project Understanding. Claremont: School of Theology, 1976.
- KING, Magda. Heidegger's Philosophy. New York: Dell, 1966.
- LINDBLOM, Joh. The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah. Lund: Gleerup, 1951.
- McFADYEN, J. E. The Book of Prophecy of Isaiah. New York: Macmillan, 1910.
- The New Oxford Annotated Bible. Ed. by H. G. May and B. M. Metzger. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

- NIEBUHR, Reinhold. The Nature and Destiny of Man. 2 vols, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943.
- NORTH, C. R. The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah London: SCM Press, 1952.
- WASHINGTON, Joseph R. The Politics of God. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.
- RESCHER, Nicholas. The Philosophy of Leibnitz. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967.
- ROBERTS, David E. Psychotherapy and a Christian View of Man. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950.
- ROWLEY, H. H. The Suffering Servant and Other Essays London: Lutterworth Press, 1952.
- WESTERMAN, Claus. Isaiah 40 - 60. New York: Macmillan, 1952.

Articles

- BETZ, H. D. "Sermon On The Mount," Spring Semester 1976, School of Theology at Claremont (available on tape).
- CONE, James. "Black Theology and Reconciliation." Christianity and Crisis, XXX (January 1973), 303.
- JONES, William. "Theodicy and Methodology in Black Theology." Harvard Theological Review, LXIV (1971), 545.
- WASHINGTON, Joseph. "The Roots and Fruits of Black Theology." Theology Today, XXX (July 1973), 128.